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ABSTRACT

The Parallel Alternate Curriculum (PAC), a model providng regular content courses, in regular classes, to secondary students with learning problems, combines basic skill instruction with alternative teaching strategies. PAC, a mainstreaming implementation program, is designed to provide inservice training emphasizing the process of how students learn and adaptation of processing into the teaching of basic skills. The program seeks to solve dilemmas facing secondary teachers trained in content rather than process by teaching them to incorporate process into basic skill instruction (such as finding the main ideas in reading, summarizing, outlining, and reading analytically). Students are thus helped to learn content information through their preferred learning style. Among alternative strategies encouraged by PAC are framed or skeleton outlines, guided listening and directed listening, taped versions of required reading, advanced organizers, multisensory presentation methods, and alternate testing techniques. (CL)

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Parallel Alternate Curriculum - -
A Mainstreaming Implementation Program
at the Secondary Level:
Alternative Teaching Strategies
Combined with Basic Skills

Submitted to
ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
The Council for Exceptional Children

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A Mainstreaming Implementation Program at the Secondary Level: Alternative Teaching Strategies Combined with Basic Skills

INTRODUCTION

In recent years public schools have clearly devoted their attention to developing programs for the students at the elementary level. However, as a result of PL 94-142 services for students up to age twenty-one have been expanded. The Mesa Public School District in Mesa, Arizona has developed a model at the secondary level for providing regular content courses to students with learning problems in a program called the Parallel Alternate Curriculum (PAC). The major emphasis of this program is to teach regular content material by using alternative teaching strategies in combination with teaching basic skills.

The underlying assumption of the PAC Program is that students with learning problems can be taught content material if teachers use certain teaching strategies. These strategies generalize to most academic subjects. The assumption is also made that these students can benefit from instruction even though they may lack skills in reading, math, and writing and are below grade level in most areas. Students are taught survival skills within the content setting that promote adjustment to the mainstreamed setting of a comprehensive

high school.

Mainstreaming means less isolation, more stimulation, being viewed as less special, and having appropriate language and behavioral models to emulate (Hewett and Forness 1977). It extends the range of options available for students with learning problems. The PAC Program provides the organizational structure for the successful implemention of mainstreaming as a result of the use of specific teaching strategies used by the content teachers. At the secondary level of education, the teachers' responsibility is viewed as just providing content material to students. However, due to the onset of special education at the secondary level and specific research on teaching techniques, secondary teachers are becoming more aware of the need to emphasize the process of teaching as opposed to just the lecture method of imparting knowledge. Teaching methods should be adjusted to coincide with the students' actual learning styles. Such adjustment circumvents the students' learning problems and caters to strengths. For example, if a student with a visual problem is having difficulty then the teaching approach should emphasize listening and speaking. If a student has auditory problems then teaching should be geared to the student's visual modality. (Kahn 1981).

The second underlying assumption of the PAC Program is that teachers can actually incorporate skill building into their content teaching. It is possible to teach content and

skills at the same time. Teaching techniques which are geared to the learner's strengths can be combined with teaching basic skills such as notetaking, listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary skills, memorization techniques, and higher level application skills that generalize across the curriculum to other content areas.

To summarize, the focus of the PAC Program is two-fold:
1) to provide classes for students in all required subject areas where these alternative teaching strategies are used and where strengths and normal potential of the students are emphasized and
2) to provide inservice training for teachers which emphasizes the process of how students learn and the adaptation of processing into the teaching of basic skills while teaching content.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In an era of declining enrollments where school budgets are being tightened and programs are being trimmed special education models are being adjusted. The early trend of special educators was to take students with learning problems out of regular classrooms and self-contain them into special classrooms. Another term for this at the high school level could be "tracking." It was thought that very specialized

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techniques and much individualized attention and protection was the solution for these students. However, this system did not address the peer-adjustment needs of these students into a regular classroom setting and integration into the real world of a comprehensive high school. Therefore, the trend of mainstreaming evolved. It has evolved partially through research that indicates students benefit from educational setting that are the least restrictive in terms of isolation from a normal population of students (Hewett and Forness 1977). It has also evolved from PL 94-142 that mandates students be provided appropriate educations in the least restrictive environments.

Consequently the secondary regular classroom teachers are faced with the "dilemma" of teaching a greater population of students with learning problems. Students who previously had been taken out of the regular classrooms and placed in more restrictive special education environments are now being placed back into regular classrooms. This is a "dilemma" because by in large the secondary teacher has been trained in a content specialty and not in teaching strategies to meet the needs of these students with learning problems. It is difficult for teachers to individualize when they teach 150 students per day.

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The frustrations of the secondary teachers continues to grow for several reasons. They must not only deal with a larger percentage of students with learning problems in their classes, but they have not been trained in dealing with these students. Students with learning problems require more of the teachers' time and energy. Aside from having to deal with "special" students teachers are troubled with the wide range of student abilities of all their "regular" students as well. They assume that teachers in elementary and junior high schools have taught students adequate reading skills for successful reading achievement in the various content areas. It is the premise of the PAC Program that it is not the <u>other</u> teacher's responsibility to teach skills, but <u>every</u> teacher's responsibility to teach skills.

Secondary teachers are also facing the "dilemma" that neither structures (tracking, grouping, isolating) nor content materials (multitexts, multilevel texts, companion texts) eliminate the obvious necessity to teach skills within the content. When teachers are pressured to "cover the curriculum" within a certain period of time any suggestion that related reading, study, and academic survival skills should also be taught is met with incredulity. The thought of adding the responsibility of teaching these additional skills causes teachers to throw up their hands in despair.

As long as teachers feel pressure to "cover" a subject, they will continue to view related reading and study skills as an intrusion and will resist devoting curriculum time to skills instruction. According to Herber (1970) teachers tend to teach the way they were taught rather than the way they were taught to teach. Teachers feel that their education courses did little in preparing them to deal with the students they teach. Herber stated,

> "It is true that very few content teachers ever take a course in reading."

This is substantiated by a survey done by Estes and Piercey (1973) that revealed only a total of nine states required reading education classes for secondary content teachers. In their 1979 survey Thomas and Simpson reported that twenty-eight state agencies had some requirements in their licensing codes to require that secondary teachers have training in reading instruction or related methodology in the process of teaching content.

AN ANSWER TO THE PROBLEM

Mesa Public Schools is attempting through the PAC Program to train teachers in the process of teaching these related skills. It is advocating that the teaching of these skills does not take time away from content teaching.

This alternative teaching methodology is based on learning theory and tested techniques. These techniques allow for the teaching of such skills as finding the main ideas in reading, skimming-scanning-studying instruction in reading assignments, summarizing, outlining, and analytic reading for specific purposes. Most students need direct instruction in how to implement skills.

The PAC alternative teaching techniques allow students to learn content information via the learning style by which they learn best. For example, if a student has a reading problem and learns best auditority then he/she would be allowed to listen to a taped version of the text while reading along visually. Bailey (1975) stated that neurological imprinting is still taking place by using such a technique. Fernald would also approve because of the multi-sensory approach.

Examples of alternate teaching strategies encouraged by the PAC Program are listed:

1) Framed (or skeleton) outlines - teaches students to take notes and learn associated notetaking skills,
2) Guided Listening Procedure and Directed Listening Activity (Cunningham and Cunningham 1976) - teaches listening comprehension,
3) Taped versions of required reading material - increases

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comprehension,

4) "Establishment of set" - gives students advanced organizers before each lesson, lecture, film, etc. is presented and increases retention of content information,

5) Activities to teach as well as reinforce notetaking skills (e.g. periodic use of notes for "open note tests or quizzes"),

6) Use of multisensory presentation methods (e.g. lecturing-auditory-while using an overhead to write down what is said-visual-while having students fill in a framed outline-kinesthetic),

7) Alternate testing techniques (e.g. open note tests, group tests, letting students prepare projects or activity games in order to demonstrate acquisition of knowledge),

8) Extensive use of audio-visual materials and equipment, in particular the use of video equipment to record activities and play back for review,

9) Use of a buddy system within the class - peer tutoring can be a very powerful tool,

10) Use of reading methods such as a) SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) (Robinson 1946) - to introduce new reading material

b) Directed Reading Activity (Betts 1946) - improves comprehension and word recognition,

11) Use of varied physical classroom arrangements,

12) Use of a "Peer Tutoring" Program,

13) Teaching the three levels of comprehension (literal, inferential, evaluative) and applying it to reading assignments, study guides, tests,

14) After teaching various study and reading skills use the skills through guided practice while teaching content.

SUMMARY

The PAC Program is attempting to set up a structure for a comprehensive secondary system whereby mainstreamed students can succeed in regular classrooms. It is attempting to train regular teachers in using alternative teaching strategies which do not take time away from content teaching. These strategies are based on proven learning theories and benefit students with learning problems as well as regular and advanced students. The skills students learn can be applied across the curriculum. These teaching strategies can be taught in any discipline; science, English, social

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studies, home economics, health, etc. If skills are improved, content information is retained and then applied at a higher level. If teachers learn to use multisensory techniques of teaching then they will be teaching more effectively to a wider range of students. If retention of information is greater then learning is enhanced and teachers have truly achieved their goal. According to Herber there is both significant and indicative evidence to show that content reachers can meet their responsibility with respect to teaching both skills and content and do so without sacrificing either. There is no way to escape poor readers other than to train them out of that condition. It is the goal of the PAC Program to assist in this endeavor.

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